The Central Sales Tax on inter State sale or purchase of goods, which was 4% prior to 1.4.2006, now stands reduced to 2% with effect from 1 6.2008.

Ministry of Finance has informed that as per Entry 54 of List II of Seventh Schedule of Constitution of India, Sales Tax is a State subject and any decision regarding reduction of Sales Tax has to be taken by the concerned State Governments only.

Reduction of oil prices

1659.SHRI BHAGIRATHI MAJHI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that presently crude oil price has gone down in the international market;

(b) if so, the reasons for not reducing the price of fuel in India, since crude oil price was high in the international market during that time India has increased the fuel price stating that companies are facing loss;

(c) if so, whether Government would reduce the fuel price; and

(d) if so, by what time Government would reduce the fuel price in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA PATEL): (a) to (d) International prices of crude oil and petroleum products have remained volatile during 2008 and in the recent past have shown a downward trend. The Indian basket of crude oil, which averaged $79.25 per barrel during 2007-08 and had gone up to $142.04 per barrel on 3.7.2008, came down to $50.91 per barrel in November, 2008. Despite the recent softening of international crude prices, the average price of the Indian basket of crude oil during 2008-09 (April '08 - 10th December '08) is still high, at $.100.34 per barrel.

Taking into account the recent fall in the international oil prices, Government has reduced the prices of Petrol and Diesel by Rs, 5/- per litre and Rs. 2/- per litre respectively (at Delhi) with corresponding reductions in the rest of the country, with effect from 6.12.2008.

Surplus refining capacity in country

1660.SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has a surplus refining capacity of 150 million tones in 19 refineries against a domestic demand of only 120 million tones of petro products;

(b) whether petroleum products are India's highest forex earner surpassing even gems and jewellery; and

(c) if so, whether Government would continue to allow export of petro products atleast till the total refining capacity exceeds the domestic demand?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) The installed capacity of the Indian Refineries as on 1.4.2008 was 148.968 MMTPA as against an annual consumption of 128.946 MMT of petroleum products.